

# City Council Candidate Questions

Brandon Barwick

**It's easy to campaign on "lower taxes," but, as costs increase, how would you accomplish a lower property tax rate? How do you prioritize realistic budget choices within each department to meet a goal of "lower taxes"?**

I think the key to this is by continuing to work on our housing shortage and build our tax base. The more homes we have the bigger the tax base to pull from, which in turn will mean we won't have to raise taxes to cover any rising costs that will incur. Hastings population has stayed at around 25,000 for many years, as costs naturally raise, the tax burden on the 25,000 rises to cover the increase, but if we can continue to build homes and increase our tax base and population then our per person liability will decrease.

We need to take an in-depth look at the budget in each department to see what cuts can be made to reach the goal of lower spending, which in turn will lower taxes, all without risking major negative impact to the community.

**As an elected leader, how do you feel you can impact the talent availability in our community?**

This starts with the youth in our community. I have previously worked with the Big Brothers Big Sisters and Mentoring Works Career Connect programs, mentoring high school students interested in the manufacturing trades. I am a Skills USA State Competition Contest Coordinator and also serve on the advisory board for the Central Community College Advanced Manufacturing Design Technology program. All of these programs that I have been involved with has been to help foster a relationship with the youth in the community, and to encourage them to attend one of our local colleges, and to stay and work in Hastings after graduation.

**Describe your thoughts about the relationship between the position of the Mayor and the City Council. Also, between the City Council and the position of City Administrator and Assistant City Administrator?**



We need to work as a team and avoid pointing fingers or blaming one another. All of these positions are non-partisan positions. We need to keep in mind that we ALL work for the taxpayers and need to have their best interest in mind with all decisions that are made. Relationships and partnerships need to have compromise, understanding, transparency, and the ability to listen to one another to be successful.

**What is your vision for the growth and development of Hasting's business and industry? What specific strategies do you have in mind to attain them?**

This goes hand in hand with the current housing shortage. In order to have further growth and development we need places for employees and people to live. We also need to take a hard look at our regulations, city codes, and enforcement to see how we can make Hastings a builder friendly environment. If we have unnecessary or over-bearing codes and regulations compared to other surrounding cities, that make growth difficult, we need to get them removed and cleaned up. We need to be upfront, transparent, and consistent with builders and investors with what is expected and required to build, renovate, or open a new business in town.

**As an elected leader, how will you help to shape a positive, growth-oriented narrative for the Hastings community?**

I will continue to challenge people to be a positive force instead of a negative force. I have been criticized in the past for saying the negativity on social media is affecting the community. Nobody wants to build, live, or invest in a negative environment. We need to look to the future and not dwell on the past.

